Read this extract from William Dalrymple’s ‘City of Djinns’

After ten years at school in a remote valley in the moors of North Yorkshire, I had quite suddenly found myself in India, in Delhi. From the very beginning I was mesmerised by the great capital, so totally unlike anything I had ever seen before. Delhi, it seems at first, was full of riches and horrors: it was a labyrinth, a city of palaces, an open gutter, filtered light through a filigree lattice, a landscape of domes, an anarchy, a press of people, a choke of fumes, a whiff of spices.

Moreover the city – so I soon discovered – possessed a bottomless seam of stories: tales receding far beyond history, deep into the cavernous chambers of myth and legend. Friends would moan about the touts on Janpath and head off to the beaches in Goa, but for me Delhi always exerted a stronger spell. I lingered on, and soon found a job in a home for destituates in the far north of the city.

The nuns gave me a room overlooking a municipal rubbish dump. In the morning I would look out to see the sad regiment of rag-pickers trawling the stinking berms of refuse; overhead, under a copper sky, vultures circled the thermals forming patterns like fragments of glass in a kaleidoscope. In the afternoons, after I had swept the compound and the inmates were safely asleep, I used to slip out and explore. I would take a rickshaw into the innards of the Old City and pass the narrowing funnel of gullies and lanes, alleys and cul de sacs, feeling the houses close in around me.

In summer I preferred the less claustrophobic avenues of Lutyens’s Delhi. Then, under pulsing sun, I would stroll slowly along the shady rows of neem, tamarind and arjuna, passing the white classical bungalows with their bow fronts and bushes of molten yellow gulmohar.

In both Delhis it was the ruins that fascinated me. However hard the planners tried to create new colonies of gleaming concrete, crumbling tomb towers, old mosques or ancient Islamic colleges would intrude, appearing suddenly on roundabouts or in municipal gardens, curving the road network and obscuring the fairways of the golf course. New Delhi was not new at all. Its broad avenues encompassed a groaning necropolis, a graveyard of dynasties. Some said there were seven dead cities of Delhi, and that the current one was the eighth; others counted fifteen or twenty-one. All agreed that the crumbling ruins of these towns were without number.

Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) the city in paragraph 1, beginning ‘After ten years…’
(b) the ruins in paragraph 5, beginning ‘In both Delhis…’.

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Remember: Imagery means you are looking for techniques such as personification, simile, metaphor, alliteration, extended metaphor, pathetic fallacy etc.

Extension:
- the description of the stories told in paragraph 2
- the description of the rubbish dump in paragraph 3
With a thrill of excitement and anticipation I opened the door of a famous yellow New York taxi cab and slid onto the worn, shabby leather seat. My journey from JFK airport to Manhattan had begun.

As we travelled through the suburbs towards the city that never sleeps, I thought with glee of my flatmates facing another dreary day at work. They had been so envious when I announced that I was visiting the Big Apple for a long weekend.

Wickedly, I decided that as soon as I got there I would send a smirking photo of me with the Statue of Liberty looming in the background. “That should make them “have a nice day”,” I thought to myself.

My attention was suddenly grabbed by my first view of Manhattan itself. The shiny, metallic skyscrapers glistened in the sunlight as they reached like silver fingers towards the sky. I hadn’t expected there to be so many of them; scanning them quickly I discovered the majestic grace of the Empire State Building and the art deco elegance of the Chrysler Builder.

We plunged into a tunnel under the Hudson River, how I wished we could have crossed over on the famous Brooklyn Bridge or even the Staten Island Ferry. Out of the tunnel and into the sunlight I was overwhelmed by the hubbub all around me. “Walk, Don’t walk”, subway signs, steam rising in clouds from the subway below, shouts and cries in a million different languages.

The streets all met at right angles in a grid system; the lack of twists and turns suggesting that they went on to infinity and beyond.

The cab screeched to a sudden halt, the driver jumped out and flung open my door, “42nd Street, have a nice day,” he shouted above the city’s noise.

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Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) the city in paragraph 2, beginning ‘As we travelled...’
(b) the buildings in paragraph 4, beginning ‘My attention was...’.

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Remember: Imagery means you are looking for techniques such as personification, simile, metaphor, alliteration, extended metaphor, pathetic fallacy etc.
Hostel No 4 teemed with activity, most of it verminous. Cockroaches swarmed through the building unchecked; they inhabited the central heating system and the warm, juddering fridge motors in every room. In the kitchens were piles of rubbish two feet high that rustled in the dark. The light bulbs in the toilets were always being stolen, making the fauna in there difficult to identify; but the occasional shouts of horror from people picking their way through the darkness were testimony to its existence.

The human overpopulation was equally intense. There were at least three and often closer to six people to each room, in which the occupants slept, worked, had parties, ate, drank, sulked, wrote letters, cooked, smoked and hung out their washing. In Room 179, which Emily and I shared with Ira, a kind, velvety-eyed girl from a town in the Voronezh region, our belongings were thrust under the beds and into two thin, coffin-shaped cupboards by the door. The fridge chugged like an idling truck. The Voronezh-made television, which Ira turned on as soon as she woke up, crackled and buzzed. The brand-new orange wallpaper peeled gently away from the walls and the rug we bought from the Univermag gave off puffs of red and purple powder at every tread.

Less than a week had passed since I'd stepped off the train with our group of 30 British students into the pale sunshine of a Voronezh morning. The clock had struck nine as we looked around us at the yellow station dozing in the dust.

"On time exactly," the Komendant, head of the hostel, had smiled, as our luggage was loaded on to a cart. "Our railway system has not yet adjusted to our new political situation."

We followed him over the tram tracks, up the street, and into a yard in which stray dogs were picking over a pile of smouldering rubbish. In front of us stood a squat, flat-fronted block: Hostel No 4. The entrance hall was underwater green; against one wall sat a babushka whose metal teeth glinted in the half-light. Heaps of rubble lay in the corners. On the fourth floor, halfway down the corridor, Emily and I were shown into a long, low room, empty but for three iron bed-frames. The stink of the rust-coloured paint that had been splashed over the ceiling and the grimy lino floor rose up to meet us, along with a stale, sweaty smell. There was a pause.

"I'm sure we can improve it," I ventured.
Read this extract from ‘Lake Malawi’s Lost Resort’ by Marina Lewycka.

It was that dangerous twilight time, when the roads are swarming with villagers, their children, chickens, runaway piglets, wayward goats and workshy dogs, all dashing to get home before nightfall; drivers of vehicles without functioning lights or brakes career around potholes, also hurrying homewards. For twilight is short in Malawi, and when night comes, the darkness is absolute. Road accidents are frequent in this dusky light. Children are often the victims. It's also the time of day when disease-vector mosquitoes come out to feast on human blood.

It became obvious that we weren't going to get to Nkhata Bay that evening, and we'd have to stop somewhere overnight. We tried a couple of upmarket lodges, but they were closed, or full, or just didn't like the look of us. We were directed to other, more remote places, which either didn't exist, or were also full; we were beginning to get worried. Suddenly, out of the dusk, a crooked, hand-painted wooden sign flickered across our headlights: "Maia Beach Cafe Accommodation". We let out a cheer, executed a U-turn, and set out down the sandy track signposted towards the beach.

After a kilometre or so, the track divided into a number of less distinct tracks. The tracks were definitely not beaten – they were hardly more than faint trails. There was no light ahead – in fact, there was no light anywhere, apart from the stars, which hung so close and bright you almost felt you could reach up and pick them out of the sky like low-hanging fruit.

Suddenly, our wheels hit a patch of soft sand, skidded, and sank in. The tyres were spinning, but not gripping. We were stuck. Getting out to assess the situation, we saw it was even worse than we had imagined. Three wheels were hopelessly churning up the sand; the fourth was spinning free, perched over a sandy bluff with a four-foot drop beneath. If we slipped down there, we would never, ever get the car out again. Beyond the narrow beam of our headlights, it was pitch black. All around us were prickly bushes, their vague menacing shapes blocking out the lie of the land. Swarms of mosquitoes smelled our fear, and swooped.

It was my first time in Africa. What happens in a situation like this, I wondered, without the AA or even a farmer with a tractor to call on? We held our breath and listened to the silence. Somewhere far away there was a sound of drumming, and we could smell wood smoke. There must be a village – but where? Then we heard voices, coming from somewhere beyond the bushes.

Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) the dangers of twilight paragraph 1, beginning ‘It was that dangerous…’
(b) nature in paragraph 2, beginning ‘After a kilometre...’.

Select four powerful words or phrases from each paragraph. Your choices should include imagery. Explain how each word or phrase selected is used effectively in the context.

Remember: Imagery means you are looking for techniques such as personification, simile, metaphor, alliteration, extended metaphor, pathetic fallacy etc.